



FIRE MOUNTAIN

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A Tale of Mystery, Treasure, Love and the Sea

WHO'S WHO AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED:

MARTIN BLAKE, law clerk with a longing for adventure, gets a taste of it when his employer,

JOSIAH SMATT, who handles some mysterious cases, directs him to carry a sealed envelope to

CAPT. WILD BOB CAREW, who is to be found in the Black Cruiser saloon at Green Street and the Embarcadero, San Francisco. While Blake is getting his instructions as to delivering the envelope

DR. ICHI, a dandified Japanese, sits at Smatt's table. While Ichi previously has been closeted with Smatt, a supposed book agent who Martin later learns is

LITTLE BILLY, a hunchback, steward of the brig Cohasset, apparently tries to sell a "Compendium of Knowledge." The book agent, however, lets his eyes rove all over the place as he talks. His attempt at a sale is interrupted by Smatt's summons. When Blake, with the envelope in his pocket, re-enters the main part of Smatt's office he has a sense of some one's having just left. That night, on his errand, Blake encounters

THE BOSUN OF THE COHASSET, alcoholically mournful over the disappearance of Little Billy, with whom he had started out to buy a birthday present for the brig's "blessed little mate." When Blake refers to Ichi and Carew, the Bosun, a gigantic, h-less Englishman, becomes suddenly belligerent.

As he hears the "Black Cruiser" Martin runs into Little Billy, whom he tells of the bosun's anxiety. Though Martin detects no odor of liquor on the hunchback, Little Billy appears unsteady and, in seeking to maintain his balance, seizes the law clerk's overcoat, in which he carries the envelope Smatt was sending to Carew. Near the saloon Martin passes a figure in a gray overcoat. He enters the "Black Cruiser" and is put in an empty room of the lodging house upstairs while Carew is to be told of his arrival. As he waits in the dark room he hears a noise that makes him look out in time to see a group of Japanese dragging a beautiful white girl, clad in a gray coat, along the passage. As he opens the door, a fist shoots through, hits him in the pit of his stomach and knocks him back into the room.

MARTIN crouched on the bed's edge and panted to recover his breath. The scuffling without grew faint, a door slammed, and the house was again quiet.

In the back of his excited mind danced grim shadows of the tales every San Franciscan knows; white women lost forever in some underground cave of Chinatown. Sickening thoughts!

Martin drove his boot against the door. It shivered and splintered.

Before he could kick a second time there came a cry from the hall, and the door was unlocked. Martin jerked it open. Confronting him was the Japanese who had been his guide, who had gone to "make prepare" Captain Carew.

"You come now," announced the

little man, bowing courteously. "What does all this mean?" demanded Martin angrily. "Who struck me through the door? Who was that white woman? What was that gang doing with her?"

"No understand," the Jap said. "No woman—no gang, no savvy." "No savvy—big lie!" cried Martin, and he pounced down upon the gray cap which was lying on the hallway floor. He held it up for the other's inspection. "You savvy this?" he demanded.

The Jap shook his head. His smile was gone and there was a hostile gleam in his eyes.

"That—no understand," he said crisply. "You come for he Captain!—you catch business he Captain!"

Martin saw he could get nothing from this fellow and without further words followed the Japanese. They paused before the last door. The

guide rapped. A deep voice rumbled orders within, chairs scraped, a door slammed, and the door before which they stood was opened.

Martin lurched forward past the man who opened the door into a room much larger than the one he had just quitted, the full width of the house, and it seemed, part of a suite, for two doors, besides the one he entered through, let upon it, from the rear wall. At the instant of his tempestuous entrance he had eyes only for a dominant figure that stood behind a paper-littered table. To this man Martin addressed himself without preliminary.

"That woman—didn't you hear?" he cried. "These Japs have a woman prisoner in this house—a white woman! See! This is her cap. I saw."

"Are you the messenger who was to come to me to-night?" interrupted the man addressed. He spoke in a commanding and vibrant bass voice. "I am Captain Carew."

It was suddenly borne in upon Martin's consciousness that he was in the presence of a personality. They were immobile yellow gargoyles, those two Japs who stood against the farther wall, they did not count. Martin stood still and played his eyes upon the other in appraisal.

And he was a picture to fill the eye, this man who bore himself so disdainfully. Tall, Capt. Wild Bob Carew. Went glimmering the graceful, blasphemous sea renegade of Martin's fancy.

Capt. Carew was quite the handsomest man Martin had ever seen. He stood at least six feet, and was leanly and finely built. He was perhaps thirty-five years old, but the springiness of youth was still in his carriage.

But Martin divined a flaw in that fine mask. The full, curved lips were shaded by a short, blond mustache, but that hirsute covering did not conceal the cruel quirk.

Martin thrust his hand into his inside overcoat pocket and felt of the envelope. Smatt's formula came to his lips.

"I wish to see you on the Hakodate business," he said.

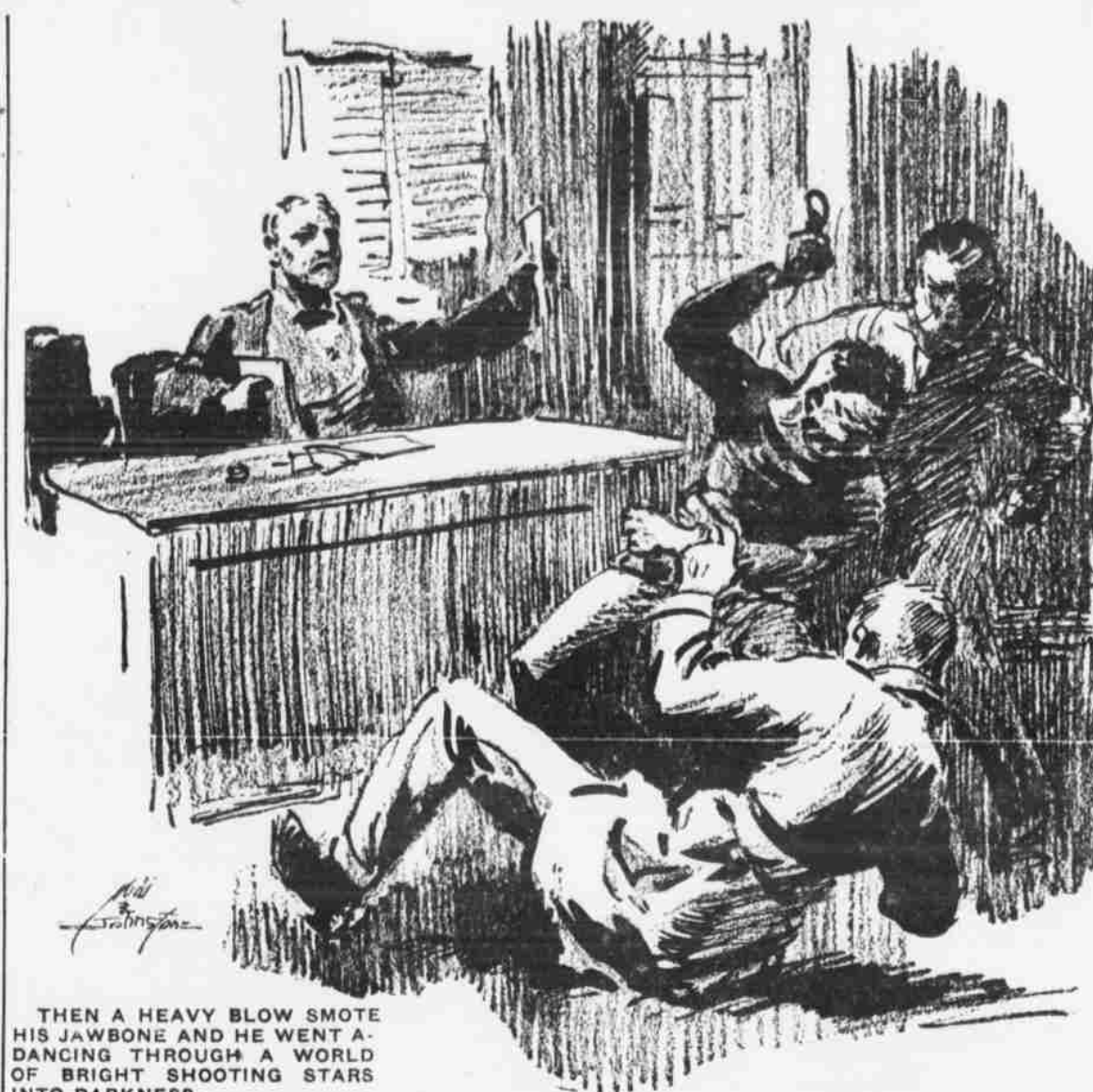
"It is time that business was settled," replied the Chief send you?"

"That is correct," said Martin.

He half withdrew the envelope from his pocket and then hesitated.

"But, Captain Carew, you could not have understood me alright!" he appealed. "I tell you, these Japanese have a young white woman!"

"Enough!" barked Carew. His



THEN A HEAVY BLOW SMOTE HIS JAWBONE AND HE WENT A-DANCING THROUGH A WORLD OF BRIGHT SHOOTING STARS INTO DARKNESS.

tone made Martin jump. "Young man, you were sent here to deliver certain papers to me. Do so."

Silently, Martin handed over the envelope. He was baffled. He was angry.

"Now—get out!" commanded Carew, waving him toward the hall.

Martin took a step toward the door and then stopped short.

He saw a man's gray overcoat lying on the floor in the corner. He wheeled upon Carew again and found the latter's eyes upon him in a

threatening glare. "You—you—that coat!" stammered Martin.

"Enough!" exclaimed Carew. "You have finished your business with me, young man. Your guide will conduct you to the street. And a word of advice, my good fellow: If you value your skin and your employment, you will promptly forget everything you may have seen in this house!"

Martin choked upon his rage. With him surged a hot hatred of this in-

solent sailor. "If you value your skin and your employment!" So that was it—a threat! He would show this high-handed Captain that Martin Blake would risk his skin as readily as the next man. The police!

"God, what treachery is this!" Carew, his face convulsed with passion, was regarding him.

"What does this mean?" cried Carew. "Come back here, you! Explain this beastly trick!"

He thrust the sheaf of papers be-

neath Martin's nose. They were sheets of blank, white paper, and they had been creased by folding.

"This is what that precious envelope contained," continued Carew. "Tell me, what—foolery is this?"

Where is that code translation? Where are my instructions? Where are my clearance papers? Hey—you starting fool!"

"Stop that!" flared Martin. "You moderate your tone when you speak to me! If you have any complaint to make, make it to Smatt, and Ichi. The envelope was given to me sealed and I delivered it to you sealed."

"It has been tampered with!" declared Carew.

"It has not," asserted Martin. "If you found those blank sheets within, they were placed there before I received the envelope."

Martin's bearing, and his positive statements, evidently impressed the Captain.

"You had better take the matter up with the men who sent me here," said Martin.

"You are right, I'll take the matter up with them," exclaimed Carew. "Meanwhile, you will remain here. I'll not lose track of you until I get to the bottom of this affair."

He barked an order in a foreign tongue. The two gargoyles at the other end of the room sprang to life and started swiftly toward Martin.

Martin wheeled about and darted for the door to the hallway. As he did he caught a glimpse of Carew. The man had not moved from his station behind the table.

Then a heavy blow smote his jawbone and he went a-dancing through a world of bright, shooting stars into darkness.

A HEADLONG flight through the darkness, falling, falling, into the bottomless pit. A crash. And Martin's mind and Martin's body became one again as he struck the floor.

He was lying face downward upon a bare floor. He moved his head about and took stock, as well as he could, of his new surroundings.

He struck one of his few remaining matches. The room was bare, not a stick of furniture in it. To his surprise, the window lifted easily. But the hand he shoved without met a heavy wooden shutter and a padlock that locked the shutter fast. No hope of getting away through the window.

He tried the door. Locked. He resorted to the method that had brought

him freedom once before that night—he lifted his foot and drove his boot against the door. And, as before, the response was immediate.

A peremptory voice was raised in the other room.

"Stop! Santa Maria, eat you not stop, I shoot!"

Martin kicked away. There was an ear-splitting crash, a splintering of wood, a hot streak passing so close to Martin's head it scorched, a tinkle of broken glass from the window behind him, a smell of burnt gunpowder. The man had shot through the door at him!

"Eef you not stop the keek, I shoot lower!" came the voice.

Martin sat down quickly upon the floor. Then he crawled into the nearest corner and crouched against the wall. No panic gripped him, but the instinct of self-preservation.

Chiefly, he was astonished. He, Martin Blake, had at last encountered a real adventure!

Strange thing about that envelope. Martin had been as much surprised as Carew at the contents. What kind of a game were Smatt and Ichi playing, sending him with injunctions of secrecy to deliver sheets of blank paper? Did Smatt and Ichi know about the abduction—the imprisonment of that girl who masqueraded in the gray overcoat?

Aye, the girl—that was the important thing! Who was she? Where had she been taken? If he could only get word to the police!

Martin's ears became suddenly aware of a faint, strange sound. Somebody was tapping on the wall in the next room. Another prisoner! Was the girl—of course it was the girl.

Tap-tap-tap, tap-tap. There it came again. Martin rapped against the wall with his own knuckles. Instantly came the response from the other side, the same number of raps. A plain answer.

But Martin's elation was short lived. The unseen tapper immediately commenced again, tap-tap, tap-tap-tap-tap.

Surely there was method in that irregular tapping. A signal, a talk in code! But he could not read it. The best he could do was repeat the taps. But this, evidently, did not satisfy the sender. The tapping on the other side ceased.

(Copyright, 1922, by the Bell Syndicate, Inc.) Deeper and deeper the mystery grows. Much happens to Martin Blake to-morrow.

Housewives' Guide of Market Prices

Shipments of Thanksgiving turkeys will begin from distant points this week, but turkey operators still only guess at the probable supply and prices. Birds have not been able to fatten properly owing to the warm weather, and many will not be in condition for even so late a holiday as Thanksgiving, Nov. 30. Because of the unusually large consumption of poultry this fall, dealers believe there will be a big demand for turkeys if industrial conditions are good. At present turkeys are retailing at 65 to 70 cents for spring, and 65 cents for storage ones, but it is expected that the price will go up to 75 cents unless the quantities of birds shipped in greatly exceed expectations.

Last Thanksgiving the market for Western turkeys was 54 to 57 cents on Monday of Thanksgiving week, and on Tuesday and Wednesday 56 and 58 cents prevailed. Some turkey men believe that the figure will be under that of last year, while others think it will be higher. The present whole-

sale price is 35 to 58 cents for Western fowl.

Reports are that the turkeys in cold storage are mainly foreign stock of low grade, and that, if the experience of last year is any criterion, storage birds will have no appreciable effect upon the market.

A large variety of fish is displayed in the fish markets this week and the first king mackerel steaks are selling at 40 cents per pound; sea bass, 40 cents; kingfish, small, sweet-meated and dark, 25 cents per pound. Haddock is 45 cents; salmon but 30 cents; striped bass, 45 cents; fine bluefish, 30 cents; butterfish and Boston mackerel, 35 cents; cod, 30 cents; fluke, 40 cents; smelts, 40 cents per pound. Among the cheaper fish are white perch, at 28 cents, weakfish and flounders, 28 cents; haddock, 12 cents. Crabapple is down to 40 cents per pound, and scallops to 45 cents; green shrimps are 20 cents and white-bait, 45 cents per pound.

Besides the heavy shipments of fruit from nearby and the West over 175 cars of grapes, apples, oranges, plums

and pears arrived the last of the week from the Pacific Coast. This consignment was said to be in excellent condition and selling at good prices. Florida tangerines to the number of 500 half boxes sold at \$2.50 to \$4.50 and Alabama Satsuma oranges brought \$2 to \$5 per half box. Both grapefruit and oranges from Florida closed the week lower and retail markets dropped the price for oranges to 10 to 25 cents and grapefruit to 3 for 29 cents.

The market for basket grapes has lately been in very poor shape, according to the Produce Price Current, with a dull demand and most of the Concord arrivals out of condition. Heavy losses recently in the Penn Yan district have resulted from frost damages and almost the whole Catawba crop has been ruined except for wine making purposes. Only a small quantity, relatively, had been picked before the freeze. The Concord which were on the vines suffered less on account of the protection afforded by the heavy foliage on the vines. Wholesale prices range from 50 cents per 20-pound basket for poor stock to 70 cents for best grade offered. Retail per small baskets, Concord bring 25 cents. Tokays are 2 pounds for 25 cents and Almerias, 20 cents per pound.

The chestnut venders have appeared

on the streets with their charcoal braziers. Receipts on the wholesale market have been comparatively light and much of the Southern stock, poor. Fancy State and Pennsylvania chestnuts sell at \$12 per bushel of 60 pounds and retail 15 cents per pound or 2 for 35 cents. Hickory nuts are meeting only a small demand except for fancy quality, which wholesales \$3.75 to \$4.50 per bushel of 50 pounds. The consumer pays 35 to 45 cents per pound. Brazil nuts are 17 to 25 cents per pound retail; almonds, 25 to 40 cents; walnuts, 35 to 45 cents; and hazelnuts, 25 cents. The

holiday season will probably stimulate the nut trade and the housewife better buy her nuts while prices are reasonable.

Mushrooms are usually considered a luxury, owing to the high quotations for household products. This year the yield is so large that the predicted

downward tendency of prices is likely to become a fact. Wednesday of last week perhaps the largest receipts for a day, 9,000 baskets of three pounds each, were received and sold from 50 cents to \$1.65. The retailer charges from 45 to 60 cents per pound; later even that price will probably be cut.

The butter market has steadied un-

der an increased demand from buyers who had run out of stock. The bulk of the delayed shipments arrived Monday and with that held over from the preceding week made a considerable store to place on sale. Creamery ex-

tras, wholesale, at 43½ cents, and State dairy tubs, 42 to 45½ cents; the former retail at 59 to 65 cents per pound and the latter 55 cents, or an increase of 2 cents over Saturday's quotation at the chain stores.

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Dromedary Dates 10¢

IN THE PERSONAL PACKAGE